

# The Week in New York

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# The man behind the cat

“The Art of Dr. Seuss” reveals an artist whose talents reached far beyond children’s books. By *Dorkys Ramos*

**DR. SUESS WAS** more than a whimsical storyteller and illustrator who taught generations of children how to read and rhyme. Even though the man born Theodor Seuss Geisel has been mostly celebrated for his brightly colored characters like the mischievous Cat in the Hat and the greedy Grinch, he also found success in commercial art and experimented with



*These Things Are Good Things* (diptych)



other genres to create works few have ever seen. This month, Pop International Galleries brings some of these rare pieces together for its retrospective show, “The Art of Dr. Seuss.”

Along with his iconic illustrations and political cartoons that spanned a career of more than 60 years, Dr. Seuss’s entire Collection of Unorthodox Taxidermy from the 1930s is on view for the first time in New York City. Included in these 17 sculptures of mythical animals’ heads mounted on a wall—some of which were created using bills, horns and antlers collected from the Zoo in Forest Park in his hometown of Springfield, Massachusetts—are imaginative pieces such as *Sea-Going Dilemma Fish*, *Blue Green Abelard* and *Semi-Normal Green-Lidded Fawn*.

The Secret Art and Archive Collection contains Dr. Seuss’s surrealist paintings and sculptures created for his own amusement that were rarely shown to the public during his lifetime. “These ‘Deco Period’ years from the 1930s and 1940s allude to his instinctive use of saturated black backgrounds combined with Art Deco elements often found within the architecture of his artworks,” says Pop International Galleries founder Jeff Jaffe. “It is also known as his ‘midnight art,’ which Seuss collectors understand as the deeper and more contemplative—though often very humorous—body of work.”

Dr. Seuss’s recurring characters often found themselves re-created in different styles but always filtered through a Seussian lens. For example, *Surly Cat Being Ejected* features a female figure reminiscent of the one immortalized in Edvard Munch’s *The Scream*. Several others portray Dr. Seuss’s alter ego (the Cat in the Hat) in various scenarios, such as in the moody *Cat from the Wrong Side of the Tracks*, *Cat Carnival in West Venice* and the artist’s most iconic self-portrait, *Cat Behind the Hat*.

You could have your own Dr. Seuss original for as little as \$850 (Who knows? Maybe you’re a megarich megafan!), but as we were all taught in kindergarten, imagination is priceless.

→ “The Art of Dr. Seuss” is at Pop International Galleries through Sept 29 (popinternational.com). Free.